

VZCZCXRO7930
RR RUEHAST
DE RUEHTA #1112/01 1161038
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 261038Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9262
INFO RUEHAST/USOFFICE ALMATY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 001112

SIPDIS

SCA COLLECTIVE

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN, INL/AAE (ALTON), SCA/CEN (OMARA)

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: INL DESK OFFICER CHECKS OUT CAMELS, KAZAKHSTANI CUISINE, KUMYS, AND OF COURSE, INL PROGRAMS

¶1. Summary: In addition to attending the quarterly meetings reported septel, INL desk officer viewed border intercepts at the Tazhen border post in Western Kazakhstan; visited the Anti-TIP Center in Karaganda; shared a Nauryz meal at the Financial Police Academy in Koschi; learned of the increased drug seizures resulting from the establishment of the Regional Border Guard Training Center in Saryagash; and visited the Military Institute Border Guard Training Center and the CARICC building. End summary.

BORDER? SAY WHAT? WHERE THE CAMELS AND HORSES ROAM

¶2. Two border posts in Western Kazakhstan provided visiting INL desk officer an excellent view of the challenges of securing some of the 13,000 kilometers of borders in the ninth largest country in the world. Tazhen and Beineu are located in the desert of the far west in Kazakhstan and provide passport control and customs services on a quasi-road and rail line crossing into Uzbekistan.

¶3. In conjunction with an INL-funded project titled "Enhancing Immigration Inspection and Border Control on the Land Border of Kazakhstan with Uzbekistan," implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to assess and lightly equip selected border posts on the border with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the INL delegation visited the posts to deliver vehicles and inspection equipment.

¶4. After a three-hour one-stop plane ride from Astana, an eight-hour overnight train ride to Beineu and a two-and-a-half hour 4WD slog through the spring mud south to Tazhen, INL Officer and staff were able to conduct the handover ceremony just in time for the binoculars to prove their utility. Testing the binoculars, a border guard saw a herder crossing the wide open border from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan who had almost been caught by the Uzbek border guards. The Kazakhstani border guards used a 4WD vehicle to respond to the apparent border violation. It turned out that the shepherd was not crossing the border intentionally but wanted to catch up with a member of his herd of grazing camels and horses that was not respecting the boundary. (Note: In the last year several cases have been reported where Uzbekistani border guards "capture" Kazakhstani citizens who inadvertently wander across the unfenced, unmarked border. The Kazakhstani border guards' quick action likely avoided another messy border incident and saved an innocent shepherd boy significant difficulties. End note.)

¶5. Aside from the overall aim of enhancing the security of Kazakhstan's borders, INL's program provides an ancillary benefit to under-funded, under-equipped, and under-staffed posts such as Tazhen. Some of the biggest challenges for border guards serving in this area are climate and geography. The post is located in a scrub desert which is impassable when the winter and spring rains arrive.

During summer months the temperature reaches 50 degrees Centigrade. In addition to the 4WD vehicle and binoculars, inspection equipment, communications equipment, INL sometimes provides air conditioning units just to make office space at the border posts tolerable.

¶16. Staffing these difficult posts will continue to be a problem for the foreseeable future. Salaries would have to be substantially increased to make service in the remote desert region attractive. Currently, officers and staff work a week of 12 hour shifts living in barracks and then travel two and a half hours back to Beineu for time off. In addition, living in Mangystauskaya oblast is expensive because the difficulties of importing products and the oil and gas development has driven prices up beyond the reach of border guard salaries.

¶17. More effective technology is necessary to monitor the vast open territory on the border with Uzbekistan. The possibility of providing such equipment is being considered within the framework of the CENTCOM-funded Counter-Narcotics Project implemented by the Embassy's Office of Military Cooperation.

SOUTH, ALONG THE BORDER

¶18. From the empty, desert west of Kazakhstan the INL desk officer traveled to the urban, riverine south where INL funded a Regional Border Guard Training Center in Saryagash. The Border Guards provided the building, located on a base they share with the military, and INL renovated and equipped a large classroom and offices to provide a central location where officers and staff of nearby posts could receive instruction without having to travel to Almaty - a one day trip one way.

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¶19. The Head of the Border Guard Sector, Duman Yelemessov, informed the delegation how he is effectively using the classroom. In just four months, Yelemessov has welcomed international trainers to teach his troops once and conducted six sessions of GOK-funded training. The officers of the Kazakh-Uzbek border sector develop training material and conduct training for locally hired staff who examine the passports of those crossing the border.

¶110. Yelemessov announced that after providing the training seminars to the border guard inspectors and controllers the number of contraband seizures for the first three months of the year exceeded the number of seizures for last two years. Within the framework of projects based on the ALOA INL will continue to create regional training centers at other locations on Kazakhstan's borders.

TO KARAGANDA TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING

¶111. In an effort to improve Kazakhstan's capacity to combat trafficking in persons, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Alik Shpekbayev, initiated the opening of the Study Center for Combating Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons (Anti-TIP Center) and requested U.S. assistance. For their part, the Government of Kazakhstan provided around \$114,000 for the improvement of the Legal Institute, including construction of dormitories for the Anti-TIP Center. The GOK also assigned three positions to staff the Anti-TIP Center. In addition, the GOK provided two classrooms and office space for the Anti-TIP Center. INL provided \$50,000 to furnish, equip and renovate Anti-TIP Center and furnish a dormitory for the participants who will be trained at the Center.

¶112. As a result of the meeting with the Director of the Legal Institute in Karaganda during the visit of the INL Desk Officer, it was agreed to conduct the official opening of the Anti TIP Center in June. Opening the Anti-TIP Center is the first step in what Shpekbayev said is a plan to create an International Anti-TIP Training center where officers of neighboring countries could be

trained as well.

TEAMWORK (AND HOSPITALITY) TO FIGHT MONEY LAUNDERING

¶13. The INL desk officer's visit to the Financial Police Academy provided an opportunity to meet the Acting Academy Director, Nurseit Baizhanov. He vowed to continue the established professional relationship between the Embassy and the Academy, where INL trains Financial Police officers on how to combat money laundering. Therefore, INL will continue supporting training for in-service officers on detection and investigation of money laundering. New courses for operational financial crimes officers are planned for September and November 2007. Baizhanov also graciously provided the INL delegation with a Nauryz eve meal of traditional Kazakh cuisine including kumys (fermented mare's milk), kurt (dried milk balls), horse meat and nauryz kozhe soup.

¶14. Baizhanov pointed out the utility of the INL-provided English Language Laboratory, noting that for more effective AML training in the longer term it is necessary to focus on development of English language skills since this will allow Kazakhstani cadets to enroll in more international institutions and in future will allow to establish the working relationship FIU in U.S.

AND THERE WAS SO MUCH MORE TO SEE

¶15. Wrapping up the visit, the INL desk officer observed border crossing activities at the Kaplanbek Southern border post with Uzbekistan; breakfasted in the Border Guard barracks in Beineu, viewed progress on the INL rehabilitation project at the Military Institute in Almaty; and was briefed by UNODC on the Central Asia Regional Information Coordination Center (CARICC) in Almaty.

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